

Thursday, January 7, 1992

Meadow Brook starts year right

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "A View from the Bridge" by Arthur Miller continue through Jan. 24 on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. For ticket information call 377-3300.

By Helen Zucker
special writer

A strong production of Arthur Miller's "A View from the Bridge," neatly directed by John Ulmer, opened at Meadow Brook Theatre on New Year's Eve.

If the rest of the season lives up to "View," Meadow Brook will have an admirable year.

Stephen Daley is marvelous as Eddie, the longshoreman with a passion for his niece. Daley's eyes seem to stare from his face. They take on a violent life of their own.

Daley turns in a well-wrought performance as the confused, suffering man in the grip of an illegitimate passion. Daley made me think of Euripides saying, "Those whom the Gods destroy, they first make mad."

VICTOR SLEZAK turns in the best performance of the evening as Rodolpho, the young immigrant with high spirits who falls in love with America and Eddie's niece. His rendition of "Paper Doll" is funny, and Slezak manages beautifully to turn the corner where innocent young man becomes a knowledgeable married man. Rodolpho emerges as a person you'd like to have around.

Gretchen Lord is a believable Catherine. Ms. Lord is a strong, healthy girl, not a pale madonna, but her looks are somehow right. As a 17-year-old turning into a woman, Ms. Lord catches the innocent love Catherine has for her uncle, and the horror of her realization. Ms. Lord is absorbing as an Italian Lolita who comes crashing into the

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ground and has the common sense to run off and marry Rodolpho. Colleen Smith-Wallnau is Beatrice, the wife who understands what is happening. She tries to tell Catherine to stop behaving like a little girl — "Stop walking around in your slip!" — and who tries to reason with Eddie to no avail. She crumbles around the edges beautifully.

There is no reasoning with passion that runs so high, and Ms. Wallnau gives us a Beatrice who understands this.

DAVID L. Regal as Marco, older brother to Rodolpho, is particularly wonderful when he raises the chair in threat over Eddie's head at the finale of the boxing scene. Regal is a strong hunk of a fellow. He's a good man who wants to work and send for his family. Marco's final explosion of frustration when he destroys himself, as well as Eddie, is both powerful and poignant.

Henry Ferrentino is the "Greek chorus" — Alfieri, the lawyer who sits in his office at the periphery of the stage and comments on the action. He is fine in a role that really isn't needed in the play.

Well, Alfieri serves as a break while he gives us Miller's viewpoint, but I am doubtful about editorializing during a play that does not need explanation.

Actors playing longshoremen, neighbors and immigration officers are all fine. The set by Barry Griffith is terrific. The icepick, placed on the railing at the opening, picked up now and then, and used so violently at the finale, is an inspiration.



Mimi Cozzens (left) is the girlfriend, Steffy; Dick Latessa plays Herb, the Hollywood writer, and Ibbits Warriner is Libby, his long-lost daughter, in "I Ought to Be in Pictures," at the Birmingham Theatre.

Comedy star makes funny faces

Performances of Neil Simon's "I Ought to Be in Pictures" continue through Jan. 24 at the Birmingham Theatre, 215 S. Woodward, Birmingham. For ticket information call the box office at 644-3333.

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

Dick Latessa makes the most of his role as a hapless Hollywood character in "I Ought to Be in Pictures" at the Birmingham Theatre.

He plays the part with kind of a hanging expression. Besides, nicely turning out his lines, Latessa creates the funniest faces, not mugging but subtly conveying the character's reaction to the events swirling around him.

"I Ought to Be in Pictures" is another Neil Simon comedy. It's built around the theme of a TV

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scriptwriter who is suddenly confronted with a 19-year-old daughter he hasn't seen since she was age 3.

The spunky kid arrives from Brooklyn, where she lives with her brother and the mother her father deserted years ago.

In the meantime, he has married and divorced twice more and currently has a girlfriend he has been seeing for the last two years.

HE ALSO is suffering from writer's block — and writer's shock when his daughter appears unexpectedly on his doorstep.

In the Simon tradition, the funny lines wrap around a story that has

warmth and explores human relationships.

Ibbits Warriner is the daughter who comes to Hollywood and wants to be an actress. She says she has been compared to "a female Dustin Hoffman." With a Brooklyn accent and plain-Jane face, Ms. Warriner definitely looks the part (although she's not the overweight person that some of her lines in the script imply).

Her performance as an overgrown tomboy is appealing. She smoothly makes the called-for transition from a display of outward confidence to revealing inner anxieties.

Mimi Cozzens as the writer's girlfriend has all the straight lines, which leaves her role in a somewhat lackluster state. The girlfriend is a make-up artist for a Hollywood studio. She has children at home and isn't in a rush to remarry.

MS. COZZENS' character is thor-

oughly likeable, but you wonder why she puts up with this, at times, hair-brained guy. Even when she takes a firm stand to move their relationship ahead, the scene doesn't get really lively.

Frank Marino directed the comedy. The first act is pleasant, but the second half picks up the action, bringing out audience laughs.

The main idea behind the story is that the daughter really wants to get some loving care from her father. She comes to Hollywood claiming she wants him to help her get into pictures (thus the play's title), but isn't really overly concerned about show business.

The setting for this Hollywood story is the writer's apartment, and Russ Smith has designed a purposely outdated, slightly sloppy interior. In Act II, the rooms are transformed with matching pattern everywhere when daughter takes over.

Guy Mitchell to give 2 shows

Guy Mitchell, popular recording star of the 1950s, is on the comeback trail and will give two performances, at 7 and 10 p.m. Jan. 21, at Alton Haven, 4443 Dixie Highway, Drayton Plains, north of Pontiac.

Admittance times will be 5:15 and 9:15 p.m. respectively. Tickets may be obtained at the door, or in advance. For details call 674-4131 or 698-9231.

A versatile performer who belts a

song, Mitchell has chalked up a variety of hits and million sellers over the years. Among his hits have been "Sing the Blues," "My Heart Cries for You," "The Roving Kind," "Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," "Heartaches by the Number," and "My Truly, Truly Fair." Aside from his own TV program, Mitchell was also featured in a trio of movies, including "Red Garters" and "Those Redheads from Seattle."

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